

Giant cable companies should not be permitted to grow larger. Further consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules that must be re-established to serve the public interest.

The concentration of power and control over distribution of media is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are under the operation of a handful of giant corporations.

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 50 percent of the national market. We depend on media to bring us information about important issues, including politics. Corporate

influence already
corrupts the
political process,
and further media
consolidation would
only add to that.

Since passage of the
Telecommunications
Act of 1996 and the
“deregulation” of
cable, consumers
have seen their
rates jump an
average of 59
percent — with some
areas experiencing
even more dramatic
increases.

We are required to
buy channels we
don't want or need
because the cable
operators bundle
them together. The
quality of customer
service often
reflects the fact
that cable
television is not a
competitive market.

Meanwhile, the cost
of cable modem
service remains out
of reach for many
households, holding
constant for years

and selectively underserving rural and low-income Americans. The American people are watching the digital divide widen even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases.

What I am waiting for is affordable, ala carte choice- real CHOICE wherein I only pay for the channels I want to watch. I don't need or have time to surf. Certainly there are millions more deliberater media consumers such as myself, and a market for a company willing to cater to us. But if a tiny group of huge corporations controls access to content, real freedom of choice, and reasonable costs, may never materialize. How sad that as the cost of computers goes down, the cost of connecting them to

cable continues to rise. I signed on with Comcast at \$40 a month, and a few years later I am at nearly \$60. This is barely tolerable for me, and unaffordable for many of my neighbors. With the planned phase-out of analog TV, what will happen? A near monopoly, that's what, with a captive market. Shouldn't all people have access to the new information technology?

Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments.

In many communities, the truly

independent sources
of local news,
information and
culture come from
the public channels
produced at the
local access
centers.

Unfortunately, local
channels lack the
resources to produce
the programming that
citizens want and
need.

The last thing we
need is to reward
the anti-competitive
actions of cable
giants by permitting
greater
consolidation in
ownership, reducing
competition, and
encouraging more of
the same.

We need local news
and a variety of
voices, not
consolidation. If
the FCC allows these
mergers to continue,
I can only conclude
that you are
supporting
stockholders-
perhaps yourselves-
rather than the

American public.